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POL 23-9 LIBYA

Department of State **TELEGRAM**

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UNCLAS PARIS 13171

SUBJ: INITIAL FRENCH REACTION TO LIBYAN COUP

1. FRENCH PRESS HAS HEADLINED LIBYAN COUP AND IS ENGAGING IN EXTENSIVE SPECULATION ABOUT ITS SIGNIFICANCE. LE MONDE SEPTEMBER 1 DESCRIBES "REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL" AS "SUPPORTED BY BAATH PARTY AND CLOSE TO THE SYRIAN REGIME". OTHER PAPERS EXPRESS UNCERTAINTY AS TO WHETHER COUP LEADERS LEAN TOWARD BAATH OR TOWARD NASSER, BUT CONCLUDE THAT SUCCESSFUL OUSTER SANUSSI MONARCHY WOULD MEAN SHARP SWING LEFTWARD IN EITHER CASE.

2. THIERRY DESJARDINS, WRITING IN FIGARO, SUGGESTS THAT MILITARY REGIME LIKELY TAKE MORE MILITANT STANCE IN ALREADY TENSE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION, PERHAPS INCLUDING WILLINGNESS USE LIBYAN OIL PRODUCTION AS ECONOMIC WEAPON AGAINST WESTERN NATIONS ACCUSED OF STANDING BEHIND ISRAEL. FRONT-PAGE COMBAT EDITORIAL ECHOES SAME THEME OF FRESH IMPETUS IN DIRECTION GREATER RADICALISM, AND SEES COUP AS GAIN FOR SOVIETS AND THREAT TO TUNISIA AND EVEN TO BLACK AFRICAN STATES.

3. COMMUNIST HUMANITE REPORTS COUP FAIRLY STRAIGHT, BUT IN SOMETIMES ERRONEOUS BACKGROUNDER REFERS TO LIBYA AS "PRIVATE PRESERVE OF LARGE U.S. AND UK OIL COMPANIES" AND SPEAKS OF "TYRANNICAL REGIME OF KING IDRESS", THUS GIVING TACIT BLESSING TO COUP AS MOVE IN RIGHT DIRECTION.

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4. FRANCE-SOIR ONLY MAJOR PARIS PAPER TO DISCUSS FRENCH INTERESTS IN LIBYA, WHICH IT DESCRIBES AS "IMPORTANT". FEATURE ARTICLE NOTES OIL PRODUCTION BEGUN BY AQUITAINE SUBSIDIARY EXPORTING VIA MOBIL FACILITIES AT RAS LANUF AND OTHER EXPLORATION BEING DONE BY CFP SUBSIDIARY, AND ALSO COMMENTS ON RISING LEVELS FRENCH-LIBYAN TRADE.

5. LATEST ISSUE JEUNE AFRIQUE COINCIDENTALLY CARRIES NEWS STORY TITLED "LIBYAN ARMY MODERNIZES", WITH DETAILS OF NEW EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS PROVIDED LIBYAN ARMED FORCES OVER PAST THREE YEARS. JEUNE AFRIQUE CREDCS ABDELAZIZ SHALHI AS PRINCIPAL ARTISAN OF MODERNIZATION EFFORT ACTING ON SPECIFIC ORDER OF KING IDRIS. SHRIVER

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